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Message Text

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51
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12

SPC-03 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 INT-08 AGR-20

DRC-01 /135 W
---------- 012769
R 301330Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6799
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 0134

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIN
SUBJ: VIPYA PULPWOOD PROJECT

REF: STATE 18822

1. WE CONCUR IN OPINION EXPRESSED BY DEPARTMENT OFFICER THAT PRESIDENT BANDA WOULD NOT AGREE TO PRC PARTICIPATION IN VIPYA PROJECT. PRESIDENT BANDA IS FLATLY OPPOSED TO ASSOCIATION WITH ANY COMMUNIST COUNTRY ON BOTH PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL GROUNDS. OTHER TOP POLITICAL FIGURES WITH OWN VESTED INTERESTS IN STATUS QUO TEND TO SHARE THIS ATTITUDE. BECAUSE OF ACROSS-THE-BOARD DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS WITH COMMUNIST REGINES WHICH HE HAS FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED PUBLICLY, PRESIDENT BANDA WOULD ASSUME THAT PRC PRESENCE IN MALAWI WOULD POSE POLITICAL THREAT TO HIS REGIME. DESPITE HIS INTENSE INTEREST IN VIPYA PROJECT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT CONSEQUENT RISK. WE NOTE NUMEROUS SIGNS OF PRESIDENT'S SENSITIVITY TO EVEN REMOTE SECURITY THREATS. FURTHER, ACCEPTANCE OF PRC WOULD INVOLVE BASIC REVERSAL IN PRESIDENT BANDA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND HE PRIDES HIMSELF ON CONSISTENCY. HE HAS REPEATEDLY STRESSED DANGERS
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OF COMMUNIST, ESPECIALLY PRC, PENETRATION IN AFRICA. PUBLICLY

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AND PRIVATELY HE HAS POINTED WITH PRIDE TO REJECTION BEFORE INDEPENDENCE OF STERLING 6-18 MILLION AID OFFER FROM PRC IN RETURN FOR RECOGNITION. ADDITIONALLY, PRESIDENT FREQUENTLY VOICES STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ROC. SWITCH WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS DOMESTICALLY REGARDING HIS INFALLIBILITY IN MINDS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INDOCTRINATED WITH HIS THESIS THAT COMMUNISM IS EVIL. FINALLY, PRESIDENT IS BELIEVER IN CAPITALIST SYSTEM WHICH HE RAGARDS AS INCOMPATIBLE WITH "SOLICALIST" APPROACH.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF PRC PARTICIPATION WOULD SIGNAL FUNDAMENTAL ADJUSTMENT IN MALAWI'S FOREIGN POLICY. SHIFT WOULD BE CONTRARY TO U.S. INTERESTS AS SET FORTH IN PARA. CONSEQUENCES INTER ALIA COULD INCLUDE FALL-AWAY IN MALAWI'S SUPPORT FOR U.S. NOTABLY IN UN, ON SUCH BROAD INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS AS KHMER REPUBLIC, KOREAS AND VIET-NAM; BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH ROC: BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL; ABANDONMENT OF "CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATION" AND NON-VIOLENCE WITH RESPECT TO PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA; HOSPITALITY ON MALAWI TERRITORY TO LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. WE WOULD PROGNOSTICATE THAT MALAWI WOULD MOVE STEADILY IF NOT SWIFTLY TO LINK UP WITH MAINSTREAM OF AFRO-ARAB FOREIGN POLICY. INTERNALLY PRC PARTICIPATION WOULD WEAKEN POSITION OF PRESIDENT BANDA WHOSE AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT DESPITE ITS FAULTS HAS SERVED MALAWI PEOPLE WELL IN TERMS OF STABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

3. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IMPRUDENT FOR CHASE TO APPROACH PRC. SHOULD WORD GET BACK TO GOM IT COULD QUICKLY SOUR MALAWI'S INTEREST IN HAVING CHASE ORGANIZE CONSORTIUM.
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